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OPEN LETTER TO POPE JOHN PAUL II
from the West Papua Refugee Community in
Papua New Guinea.

Your Holiness,

This letter comes to you from the West Papuan refugee community in Papua New Guinea who are taking advantage of our freedom here to write to you on behalf of our suffering compatriots in "Irian Jaya".

We write as West Papuans, to extend to your Holiness our warmest greetings on the occasion of your first visit to Indonesia and East Timor, and to assure you of our deep affection and respect.

We know from other visits and speeches made by your Holiness that those who suffer are of special concern to you, as they were to Jesus himself.

We know that you are particularly concerned about the situation in Irian Jaya. We took great consolation and encouragement when in both 1984 and 1987, . . in your speech on receiving the credentials of the Indonesian Ambassador to the Holy See, your Holiness drew the Indonesian Government's attention to the Holy See's preoccupation and concern for the welfare of the people of Irian Jaya. We were filled with gratitude when at that time you urged the Indonesian Government to allow relief organizations to work in our homeland.

Your Holiness may be aware that there are more than 10,000 refugees from Irian Jaya in Papua New Guinea. The situation in our homeland does not allow us to return. Our villages are not safe, our lands taken, our basic rights as human beings abused. International relief organizations such as the UNHCR and the International Red Cross are refused entry to Irian Jaya. We the Melanesian people of Irian Jaya are rapidly becoming a minority in our own land. We have little opportunity

to participate in the economic development of our land, our forests and our resources. There is little respect for our ethnic,historical and cultural identity.

Your Holiness it must be stated that there will always be conflict as long as this injustice is allowed to continue. There will always be refugees from Irian Jaya.

We have little faith in governments. The rights and legitimate aspirations of small peoples are of little consequence to them,it seems to us. We do not accept their secular "solutions",based on self interest,and without consideration of the Christian values of peace and justice, without taking into account the aspirations of the people of West Papua, and without taking into account their true welfare.

The restrictions in our homeland makes it difficult for the Bishops, clergy and laity of the Church in Irian Jaya to speak openly on these issues. We sincerely believe that if your Holiness were to add the influence of the Holy See in the search for peace and justice in Irian Jaya, the situation would be greatly assisted.

It is not for us to say what your precise role should be. We do ask, however that during your visit to Indonesia and East Timor, when you will be in the vicinity of our homeland you will remember the Melanesian people of Irian Jaya in your prayers, and that you will repeat your concern for the situation of our people to the Indonesian Government. You will be nearest to our homeland when you visit Dili, East Timor. We trust that when you address a similar situation there, you will also speak to our situation.

We were filled with joy when we welcomed you to the island of New Guinea in 1984 when you visited Papua New Guinea. Your visit to Indonesia makes us look again to our homeland. We look to you, as our spiritual father for leadership and support.

We pray that God will protect you and generously bless your mission.

Authorised by

A. Hanasbey A. Saweri W. Zonggonao

for the West Papua Refugee Community in Papua New Guinea.
October 9th, 1989.